Forschungen zum Alten Testament
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J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen

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herausgegeben von
Bernd Janowski und Hermann Spieckermann

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Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition

by

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Die Deutsche Bibliothek — CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Schmidt, Brian B.:
Israel's beneficent dead: ancestor cult and necromancy in ancient Israelite religion and tradition / by Brian B. Schmidt.
– Tübingen: Mohr, 1994
(Forschungen zum Alten Testament; 11)
ISBN 3-16-146221-1
NE: GT
978-3-16-157789-5 Unveränderte eBook-Ausgabe 2019

The book was printed by Gulde-Druck in Tübingen on acid-free paper from Papierfabrik Gebr. Buhl in Ettlingen. Binding by Heinr. Koch in Tübingen.

Printed in Germany.

ISSN 0940-4155

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the memory of my grandfather, Hiram Ardis Simons, a farm boy-turned-school teacher without whose example and support this book would not have been conceivable, let alone possible. His ten year silence only intensifies my inclination to embrace its results.

To live rationally one must live so that death cannot destroy life.

Tolstoy, *What I Believe*

Preface

Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
those who love it will eat its fruits.
Proverbs 18:21

This book is a significantly revised version of a thesis which I completed in preliminary form in the spring of 1990 and which I defended for the University of Oxford's Doctorate of Philosophy degree in the winter of 1992. I am grateful to the many who saw this project through to its present form. I am particularly indebted to my energetic supervisor, Dr. John Day for his willingness to dispense of his encyclopedic knowledge and judicious guidance during my dissertation days.

I also wish to offer my thanks to Stephanie Dalley, Ernest Nicholson, Jonas Greenfield, John Barton, and Kevin Cathcart all of whom plumbed many meanderings during my reading and defending days at Oxford; to John Van Seters, Jack Sasson, and James Vanderkam who provided me with the opportunity to continue my research while teaching in the Research Triangle of North Carolina ever offering their guidance, encouragement, and assistance throughout those formative years; to William Hallo and Wayne Pitard who faithfully offered their research in progress in exchange for my repeated pleadings; and to Gary Beckman, Bertrand Lafont, Piotr Michalowski, and Norman Yoffee for their helpful comments on various portions of this work as it drew ever nearer to publication.

I express my appreciation to Jarl Fossum who suggested J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) as a publisher and who kindly supported the submission of my manuscript for consideration; to Bernd Janowski and Hermann Spieckermann for accepting it in the FAT series; and to the University of Michigan for its support in preparing the manuscript for publication. I would like to extend a very special thanks to my editor and research assistant, Harry Weeks, Ph.D. candidate, without whom this book would never have reached its state-of-the-art form. His perseverance, expertise, and technical guidance shall forever remain a model for future projects.

I gratefully acknowledge the many sacrifices made by my wife Kathy and the endurance exemplified by my children Blake and Hayley who have shared the entirety of their short-lived lives with what was for the longest time, that invisible

third sibling. Finally, I cherish the encouragement and support I received from my family, friends, and colleagues at those crucial moments when doubt got the better of me.

It is only fitting that in closing, I anticipate any shortcomings of this book. They are due to the failings and limitations of its author and no other.

Ann Arbor, Spring 1994 Brian B. Schmidt

Contents

Abbreviations

AAAS	*Annales archéologiques arabes syriennes*
AAR	American Academy of Religion
AASOR	*Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
ABL	R. F. Harper, *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters* (Chicago 1982–1914)
ACF	*Annuaire du Collège de France*
AEPHER	*Ecole pratique des hautes études, V^e section-sciences religieuses: Annuaire*
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AHw	*Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (ed. Wolfram von Soden, Wiesbaden, 1965-81)
AION	*Annali dell'istituto orientale di Napoli*
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (ed. J. B. Pritchard, Princeton, 1969[3])
AnSt	*Anatolian Studies*
AO	*Tablets in the collection of the Musée du Louvre*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOB	*Altorientalische Bibliothek*
AOS	American Oriental Society
ARET	Archivi reali di Ebla: Testi
ARI	*Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*
ARM	Archives royales de Mari
ARMT	*Archives royales de Mari (Textes)*
ArOr	*Archiv orientâlní*
AuOr	*Aula orientalis*
AT	D. Wiseman, *Alalakh Tablets*, (London, 1953)
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
B.C.E.	Before the Common Era
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1907)

BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Hrsg. von K. Elliger und W. Rudolph, Stuttgart, 1983)
BIN	*Babylonian Inscriptions in the collection of J. B. Nies*
BM	*Tablets in the collections of the British Museum*
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BO	*Bibliotheca orientalis*
BR	*Biblical Research*
BSMS	*Bulletin of Syro-Mesopotamian Studies*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (I. J. Gelb, et.al. Chicago, 1956-)
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBS	R. Labat, *Un calendrier Babylonien des travaux des signes et des mois* (Paris, 1965)
C.E.	The Common Era
ChrH	Chronistic History
CRAIBL	*Comptes rendus des séances de l'académie des inscriptions et belles-Lettres*
CT	*Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*
CTA	*Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939* (Ed. par A. Herdner, Paris, 1963)
DN	Divine Name
dtr	deuteronomistic
DtrH	Deuteronomistic History
EA	*Die El-Amarna Tafeln* (Hrsg. J. A. Knudtzon, Leipzig, 1910-15)
EI	*Eretz Israel*
ET	English translation
G	Basic stem of the verb
GHD	The Genealogy of the Hammurapi Dynasty
GKC	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (ed. E. Kautzsch, tr. A. E. Cowley, Oxford, 1910^2)
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
H	tablets from Harran
HC	Holiness Code
HSS	*Harvard Semitic Series*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IBS	*Irish Biblical Studies*
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*

JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JEN	*Joint Expedition with the Iraq Museum at Nuzi*
JEOL	*Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JPS	*The Jewish Publication Society* (A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text, Philadelphia, 1985)
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
K	tablets from Kouyunjik (Nineveh)
KAI	*Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* (Hrsg. von H. Donner und W. Röllig, Wiesbaden, 1962-64)
KTU	*Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit.* Teil 1: Transkription (AOAT 24. Hrsg. von M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, und J. Sanmartín, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976)
LAS	*Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal* I,II (AOAT 5/1-2. S. Parpola, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970,1983)
LKA	*Literaturische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur*
LTP	*Les textes para-mythologiques* Ras Shamra-Ougarit IV. Èditions Recherche sur les Civilisations. Paris, 1988
LXX	*Septuagint*
MARI	*Mari annales recherches interdisciplinaires*
MSK	Meskéné-Emar
MSL	*Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon* (ed. B. Landsberger, et.al., Rome, 1937–)
MT	Masoretic text
MVÄG	Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatischen/Vorderasiatisch-Ägyptischen Gesellschaft
NAB	*New American Bible*
NABU	*Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires*
NCB	*New Century Bible*
ND	tablets from Nimrud (Calah)
NEB	*New English Bible*
NIV	*New International Version*
OECT	*Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts*
OIP	*Oriental Institute Publications*
OLP	*Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*

OLZ	*Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*
OrAn	*Oriens antiquus*
P	Priestly Source
PBS	University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, *Publications of the Babylon Section* [=UM] (Philadelphia, 1911–)
PEF	*Palestine Exploration Fund*
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
PGM	*Papyri Graecae Magicae* (2 vols, ed. H. K. Preisendanz, et. al., Leipzig und Berlin, 1928, 1931)
PIBA	*Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association*
PN	Personal Name
PRU	*Le Palais royal d'Ugarit*
RA	*Revue d'assyriologique et d'archéologie orientale*
RAI	Rencontre assyriologique internationale
RB	*Revue biblique*
RES	*Revue des études sémitique*
RHA	*Revue Hittite et asianique*
RHR	*Revue d'histoire des religions*
RIH	Ras Ibn Hani
RlA	*Reallexikon der Assyriologie*
RN	Royal Name
RS	*Ras Shamra*
RSF	*Rivista di studi fenici*
RSV	*Revised Standard Version*
SEL	*Studi epigrafici e linguistici*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SVT	*Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*
TA	*Tel Aviv*
TAPS	*Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*
TC	*Tablettes Cappadociennes* [=TCL 4]
TCL	Textes cunéiformes, Musée du Louvre
TGUOS	*Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society*
TJT	*Toronto Journal of Theology*
TLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TM	*Tell Mardikh (Ebla)*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
UT	*Ugaritic Textbook* (C. H. Gordon, Rome, 1965; Supplement, 1967)
UVB	*Vorläufiger Bericht über die von dem Deutschen Archäologischen Institut und der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft aus Mitteln der*

	Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft unternommenen Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
YBC	tablets in Babylonian Collection, Yale University
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ZRGG	*Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*

Introduction

The following investigation sets out to ascertain whether or not the ancient Israelites believed in the dead's supernatural beneficent powers and, if so, to reconstruct what can be known about the origin, history, and character of that belief. Owing to ancient Israel's lack of speculative discourse on the subject, an examination such as ours must proceed along alternative avenues of inquiry. Therefore, the present study comprises a sustained analysis of the potential ritual expressions of that belief which have been preserved in the textual remains from ancient Syria-Palestine.[1] Two ritual complexes have been repeatedly identified as reflective of the power of the ghost to supernaturally bless the living: those rites affiliated with the cult of the ancestors and those associated with that form of divination known as necromancy.

In the modern study of ancient Israelite religion, the ancestor cult and necromancy have been the topics of considerable inquiry and indications are such that this will continue into the foreseeable future. An increasing number of biblical scholars advocate the view that significant sectors of pre-exilic Israelite society participated in ancestor cult and necromantic rites. These rites, in turn, have often been cited as evidence for an ancient Israelite belief in the dead's supernatural beneficent powers, a belief originating in and deriving its character from the Amorite and Canaanite cultures of the third through second millennia B.C.E.[2]

While it is tempting to argue that recent studies have vindicated the views of late nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars who lacked sufficient textual and artifactual evidence to adequately support their claims, it is more than mere coincidence that the current *opinio communis* approaches the virtual unanimity

[1] To be sure, the term Syria-Palestine (or any of its variant forms, e.g., Syro-Palestinian), reflects the dubious conflation of ancient Syrian and Palestinian cultures. Syria-Palestine is adopted herein purely for purposes of evaluating the conflation evident in the history of scholarship. Among others, Rainey 1965a:102–25; Craigie 1981:99–111; 1983:145–67 have rightly criticized the tendency to collapse the ancient cultures of Ugarit and Canaan or Palestine into a single "Canaanite" world.

[2] The *Canaanite and Israelite Religion* session of the Society of Biblical Literature devoted its entire program to the topic at the 1992 annual meeting held in San Francisco and note also the recent treatments by Healey 1989:33–44; Lorenz 1990:21–31; van der Toorn 1990:203–22; Dietrich and Loretz 1990a:57–65, 75–77; de Moor 1990:233–45; Niehr 1991:301–306; Mendenhall 1992:67–81; Hallo 1992:381–401; Ackerman 1992; Levine 1993:468–79.

achieved by the turn-of-the-century scholarship. As a reconstruction of the modern history of interpretation like that of Spronk reveals, much current research derives its impetus from these earlier works.[3] In any case, both the early modern investigations as well as the re-emergent interest in Israelite ancestor cults and necromancy can trace their lineage back to the claims of late nineteenth century social historians. Zealously applying evolutionary and typological models to the history of world religions, these turn-of-the-century intellectuals identified the ancestor cult (in which necromancy was typically included) as the incipient expression of humanity's search for ultimate reality and human destiny. Accordingly, belief in the supernatural and in one's survival after death were given their primal expression in this cult. That is to say, the belief in the dead's superhuman power eventuated into the abstraction "god", while the postmortem persistence of a benevolent ghost provided the stimulus for envisaging a beatific afterlife.[4]

In addition to the dubious nature of this rather outmoded theoretical framework, the history of interpretation has suffered from terminological inaccuracy and methodological isolationism. All too often, the vocabulary reflective of a wide range of mortuary practices has been mistaken as reflective of the ancestor cult or necromancy. Furthermore, recent advances in the anthropology of death invalidate some of the essential underlying assumptions of biblical research on the topic. For example, the available ethnographic record nullifies the long held truisms of a universal response to death and its original expression in the ancestor cult. The diversity of human response to death is everywhere apparent.[5]

In what follows, selected mortuary practices are classified and defined, and where possible, their attendant beliefs identified. Following upon this, the textual data and, to a far lesser extent, the archaeological finds from Syria-Palestine are analyzed in order to test the assumption that the Israelites embraced the belief in the benevolence of the dead and that the origins and character of that belief are to be found in early Canaanite religion.[6] Lastly, the relevant biblical texts are

[3] Cf. Spronk 1986:25–83 and the surveys by Margoliouth 1908:444–50; Ribar 1973:4–8. Some of the early advocates include Tylor 1871 in Britain; Halévy 1874 in France; Lippert 1881 in Germany; Oort 1881:350–63 in Holland. For a treatment of earlier nineteenth century scholarship, see Spiess 1877 as noted by Spronk 1986:25–27.

[4] The 1864 work of the French social historian, Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *La cité antique* (= *The Ancient City*, 1873) stands as the starting point for many biblical researches on the ancestor cult both old and new (cf. e.g., Brichto 1973:1–54). For the extent of his influence, cf. Momigliano 1977:325–43; Finley 1977:305–27; Humphreys 1987:459–61. See also the two part foreword to the 1980 edition of *The Ancient City* by Humphreys and Momigliano.

[5] This diverse response in the human record is underscored by Ucko 1969:262–80 and reiterated in the treatments on the anthropology and archaeology of death in Metcalf and Huntington 1991 (first edition 1979); Humphreys and King 1981; Bloch and Parry 1982; Palgi and Abramovitch 1984:385–417; Morris 1987:29–43; 1992:1–30; Bowker 1991.

[6] We can only offer an abbreviated assessment of the archaeological data within the confines of the present context, cf. esp. 4.4.3.

closely examined and their compositional histories reconstructed. Such a strategy provides not only a much needed control for evaluating the comparative data from the worlds of the ancient Near East and beyond, but it also lays an adequate foundation upon which to reconstruct a history of Israelite religion on the matter.

Chapter 1

Mortuary Rites: A Descriptive Glossary

The ancient Israelite ancestor cult and the practice of necromancy have been the objects of an extensive history of interpretation. This chapter is designed to both build upon and to advance that history by defining the terms upon which any substantive examination of the subject must rely. Warrant for such an approach derives in part from the repeated use of terms and models by biblical scholars more at home in the anthropologies of religion and death. In addition to facilitating the evaluation of that history and its use of anthropology, the glossary outlined herein will serve to verify the interpretative decisions made in the textual analyses comprising chapters 2, 3, and 4.

What follows is essentially an 'intellectualist' endeavor. That is to say, we will examine rituals as a means of access to their corresponding beliefs. Due recognition is made of the limitations inherent in the intellectualist study of ancient religion that underlies both the present study and those that have gone before. Critics of intellectualist research have rightly asked: what sectors and ideologies of a given society can a limited data base reasonably represent? Be that as it may, the most formidable obstacle for intellectualist oriented study is the interpretation of ritual as symbol; does a rite have a one-to-one correspondence with a particular belief or are their relationship(s) more complex? The view adopted here is that the intellectualist orientation can stand as a viable avenue of inquiry when applied in conjunction with other approaches. Any rite must be evaluated as part of the larger system of ritual action to which it belongs, for that system uniquely informs the relations between a given ritual and the ideational world. We will, therefore, implement additional approaches such as a structuralist orientation along the lines advocated by Leach as a counter balance to the intellectualist orientation.[1] A direct one-to-one correspondence between ritual and belief is assumed here only in order to answer the question that has formed the starting point for the history

[1] Leach 1976. Morris 1992:17–21,201 offers a survey of the state of the art. He discusses ritual, symbol, and the interpretation of mortuary remains as the domain of historical inquiry rather than as an archaeological version of formalist literary theory.

of interpretation, namely, does a given ritual express a belief in the supernatural beneficent power of the dead?

The terms selected for treatment in the glossary represent a variety of *mortuary rites*, some related to, but others that are often confused with, the ancestor cult and necromancy.[2] The corresponding rites selected for analysis fall into one of four ritual complexes: funerary rites, the mortuary cult, the death cult, and 'magical, mortuary rites'. Funerary rites include burial and mourning rites. The mortuary cult includes the regular care or feeding of the common dead or the ancestors as well as the customary commemoration of the dead. The death cult presupposes the veneration and worship of the dead who are usually identified as the ancestors. Magical, mortuary rites involve the manipulation of the dead as sought in necromantic and exorcistic or ghost expulsion rites. Each rite will be defined and illustrated by means of the comparative ethnographic record in order to ascertain whether or not a given ritual possesses the potential for conveying the belief in the dead's supernatural beneficent power.

Funerary rites are typically classified as rites of passage. The rites of passage mark the course of a person through the cycle of life, from one stage to another over time, from one social role, status, or position to another. In the rites of passage, a fundamental, tripartite process can be discerned: separation (from a former status), transition (or liminality), and incorporation (or aggregation, into a new status).[3] *Mourning rites* are performed during the period in which the dead person passes from this life (separation), through death (transition), to the next life (incorporation). With varying degrees of intensity, they take place during the transitional or liminal stage of death which itself may last for an extended period of time (in some cases, for several years). Mourning rites can therefore be subsumed under the more general rubric of funerary rites for funerary rites would also encompass other ritual complexes such as the rites of burial. The period of mourning characteristically ends with the arrival of the dead in the afterworld. In the case of burials, arrival may coincide with interment or an additional time period might be required for the journey to, and arrival in, the afterworld. In the latter case or in cases where burial is not observed, arrival often is signaled by the consumption of the body, whether it be induced naturally (i.e., through decay) or artificially (e.g., by means of cremation or cannibalism).

But what differentiates funerary rites from death cult rites? In spite of advances which have been made in social anthropology since Émile Durkheim's, *The Ele-*

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[2] The label *mortuary rite* will be employed to designate any practice which falls within the purview of those rites that are recognized as expressive of the human response to death regardless of the presence or absence of the belief in the supernatural beneficent power of the dead. In other words, it might refer to any one of the several terms treated below.

[3] Van Gennep 1960:146–65; cf. Myerhoff, Camino, and Turner 1987:380–86.

mentary Forms of the Religious Life, his definition of the *cult of the dead* remains a standard for historians of religion. He identified the death cult as comprising "repeated standardized practices oriented toward the dead at ritual locations associated with the dead." Durkheim also suggested that death cult practices served, "to fulfill the need which the believer feels of strengthening and reaffirming, at regular intervals of time, the bond which unites him to the sacred beings upon which he depends."[4] As it stands, his definition is rather limited in its usefulness, for in several respects it defines the death cult only too vaguely. But before we take up the matter of definition further, a final element in Durkheim's scheme should be mentioned. According to Durkheim, in societies where death cults exist, the belief in the persistence of some aspect of the human personality after death is universally attested.[5] This belief, while perhaps not to be understood as the underlying motivation explaining the existence of all such cults, stands for Durkheim as a common denominator.

Durkheim's distinction between rites and a cult offers some assistance in clarifying the difference between funerary and death cult rites. Rites might comprise practices which appear only in certain and, we would add, temporary circumstances, while a cult comprises a system of practices repeated periodically.[6] More to the point, funerary rites occur between death and the arrival in the afterworld, whereas death cult practices begin with the dead's arrival in the afterworld and continue on a regular basis, perhaps, indefinitely. In any case, funerary rites do not by necessity, assume the persistence of man after death.[7] For example, some mourning rites may be intended purely for the benefit of the living. If and when they do presuppose such persistence, if what remains is viewed as existing in the form of a ghost or spirit, it might be construed as potentially hostile until the necessary rites are completed and said spirit is consigned to the next world. Alternatively, the ghost might be considered frail and merely in need of sustenance. In other words, belief in the beneficence of the dead is not a obligatory aspect of the funerary ritual.

The characteristic elements of the death cult are likewise found in the *cult of the ancestors* but with important qualifications attached. Before those are taken

[4] Durkheim 1915:63. Nilsson 1950:585–86 adopted Durkheim's definition in his treatment of the cult of the dead in Minoan-Mycenaean religion. Unlike his mentor, Fustel de Coulanges, Durkheim did not view the ancestor cult as the earliest form of religion and against Max Müller, nature religion was not to be given that honor. For Durkheim, totemism was the earliest form of religion. Nevertheless, the ancestral spirit played a central role in his theory as an aspect of the totemic principle.

[5] But cf. Goody 1962:18,379 and for the ancestor cult cf. Fortes 1976:5; Newell 1976:21–29; Singleton 1977:18–25; Hardacre 1987:263.

[6] Durkheim 1915:63 and cf. Thomas 1987:450–59. The observation of Singleton 1977:3 is apropos, "Though all peoples solemnize the burying of their dead, far from all subsequently devote a great deal of their ritual time and energy to remaining on good terms with the departed."

[7] Goody 1962:18.

up however, the most distinctive feature of the ancestor cult over against the death cult must be mentioned, namely the real or perceived kinship ties which bond the living and the dead. The ancestor cult comprises beliefs and practices directed towards dead predecessors. The cult of the dead is directed toward the dead in general while the ancestor cult is a lineage cult.[8]

Regarding the question of the dead's postmortem existence, Fortes has pointed out that certain varieties of the African ancestor cult can exist alongside the sketchiest lore about the mode of existence of the dead. Furthermore, the rites are not necessarily directed towards consigning the ancestors to a spiritual realm of existence in a supernatural world, but towards discorporating them from the social structure. In the African context, the metaphysical implications of western notions of the soul—indestructible essences that animate bodies and succeed them in the timeless realm of God pending resurrection in a corporeal form—are not essential beliefs. Among the Ashanti, an ancestral 'spirit' is not thought of as a kind of nebulous being or personified mystical presence, but primarily as a name attached to a relic such as a stool. The constituent of personality is not imagined to survive in a supernatural realm after death, but is believed to remain behind to look after descendants.[9] Moreover, an ancestor's afterlife is specifically tied to the continued authority he or she can exercise.[10] They might behave either benevolently or malevolently. When the latter is the case, it may be due to the lack of close ties with any one living group which in turn demonstrates that the behavior of the dead does not terminate their status as recipients of ritual.[11]

A second, distinctive feature is the moral influence which the ancestors exercise over their descendants. Ancestors exert positive moral forces and can cause or prevent misfortune, whereas the spirits of the dead in general may exercise powers which achieve amoral or even antisocial ends. That is to say, misfortune at the hands of the ancestors is interpreted as retribution for failure in matters of filial piety. Misfortune at the hands of the dead who lack living relations may be explained as an act of a malicious, arbitrary, or capricious apparition.[12]

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[8] Ahern 1973:121 has summarized some typical credentials for ancestorhood. She listed "an adult man who is a direct descendant of the lineage-ancestors and who is married, sired male children and handed down property to his sons." There are exceptions of course as in Japan where the responsibilities fell to the female household heads who succeeded deceased mothers-in-law.

[9] Fortes 1965:126–29; cf. Singleton 1977:2–35, esp. pp.18–25 on the semi-personal nature of the ancestral spirit in Africa.

[10] Cf. Fortes 1976:1–16; Newell 1976:17–29.

[11] So Newell 1976:21–29. This serves to qualify the notion that the ancestral spirits were solely benevolent, while the spirits of the dead more generally were malevolent (or vice versa). Thus, with regard to Mesopotamia, the opposing views of Bayliss 1973:115–25 and Skaist 1980:123–28 require qualification in spite of the fact that both invoke anthropological data from Africa.

[12] Cf. Gluckman 1937:117–36; Fortes 1976:9–10 on this distinction between the cult of the dead and the ancestor cult within the African context.

Furthermore, the traditional view that the cult of the ancestors is merely a religious phenomenon fails to take into account the ethnographic data which suggest that it is also an aspect of the living social relations in a given society and closely linked to a society's regulation of inheritance and succession. This equally applies to the *cult of the royal ancestors.* In Africa, for example, the king participates in the cult of his ancestors and may appeal to them on behalf of the nation as any head might do in the limited descent group context. Thus, the royal version parallels the pattern of the lineage cult of the ancestors. However, the national significance of the royal ancestor cult derives more from the political rank of those ancestors being worshipped than from their ancestral status.[13]

The cult of the ancestors might manifest itself in the *cult of the common ancestors*, those non-royal deceased who have real kinship ties with the living. It has been suggested that it may also be made manifest in the cult of the mythic ancestors.[14] It should be pointed out however that the so-called mythic ancestors were never perceived as human procreators begetting and bearing offspring, but were conceived as creators of humanity.[15] Therefore, a more appropriate category for this group might be the mythic heroes and, as such, they would be more suitably located in that complex of rites related to the *hero cult.* The ancient Greek versions of the hero cult provide an excellent example of this ritual complex. Those who might be considered worthy of cultic rites typically possessed some extraordinary quality, though not necessarily a virtuous life. As a member of this class, a given hero might be placed at any one of several points along a continuum as the heroes included a wide array of figures: faded deities, vegetation spirits, epic heroes, the eponymous figures, and heroes who lived in historical times.[16] At the two extremes were those who descended from the world of the gods, like the mythic heroes, and those who became heroes after their death, the legendary or epic heroes.[17]

The mythic heroes were closer to the gods than to the legendary heroes. Nevertheless, the world of the gods and the world of heroes—and of common mortals for that matter—were kept quite distinct. Only a select few like Dionysus and Heracles who were considered *hērōs theos*, might stand as exceptions to this rule.

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[13] Cf. Fortes 1965:122–42; 1976:1–16.

[14] Cf. Berndt 1970:216–17. For a summary treatment of the mythic ancestors, cf. Long 1987:268–70. Recently, Xella 1982:654–55 has suggested the existence of mythic ancestors within the Israelite context.

[15] Fortes 1976:3–4.

[16] Cf. Farnell 1921:280–342; Burkert 1985:203–15; Garland 1985:1–12,88–93. On the origins of the Greek hero cults, cf. Kerényi 1959:10–22; Coldstream 1976:8–17; Snodgrass 1982:107–19; 1988:19–26; Antonaccio 1987; Whitley 1988:173–82; Garland 1992:31–35.

[17] In the Greek traditions, both can be found in the epic poetry. This probably reflects the mixture of ancient and late traditions, so Burkert 1985:205. Moreover, all such heroes, whether mythic or legendary, fall victim to death, so Kerényi 1959:1–22.

Moreover, kinship ties were typically lacking and an extended period of time usually lapsed before regular rites intended for the hero were instituted.[18] In any case, the Greek hero cult was otherwise not one in which the hero was worshipped or apotheosized like the Olympian gods. Rather, the heroes were at most venerated (see below on the distinction between worship and veneration).[19] It was believed that the heroes, in contrast to the pitiful, ordinary dead, could assist the living by protecting them against enemies and diseases and by opening the wombs of barren women. They were on rare occasion labeled healers or *iatroi*.[20]

Other mortuary rites that are widely attested include the veneration of the dead and the worship of the dead. The *veneration of the dead* assumes the persistence of man after death. Moreover, it presupposes the belief that the dead can influence the high god(s) to act on behalf of the living. The dead obtained this power through their heroic acts or qualities exhibited while living, or thought to be living in the case of the mythic heroes. Not only do the living offer the dead their expressions of gratitude, but the dead receive various forms of inducements from the living. The dead do not appear to have the same degree or quality of divinity as the high god(s), nor can they act independently of the god(s). Therefore, they are not worthy of, and unlike the gods, they do not receive, worship. The same set of criteria applies in the case of the *veneration of the ancestors*.[21]

As a parallel, we offer the Roman Catholic cult or veneration of the saints in which the deceased intercede on behalf of the living. This, the dead can accomplish owing to their acquired access to divine *virtus* or power. The dead gain such an exalted position through the testimony of a virtuous life accompanied by miracles with the latter often considered the divine reward for the former. In this practice, the dead receive veneration or *douleia* but not worship or *latreia* which is reserved only for God.[22]

Goody concluded that the *worship of the dead* implies not only the idea of survival after death, but also the belief that the dead, as superior powers to

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[18] Coldstream 1976:9; Burkert 1985:204.

[19] Cf. Kerényi 1959:1–6. Characteristically, the sacrifices to the heroes were not the same as those offered to the major gods and the altars were distinct in form and lower in height.

[20] Cf. Farnell 1921:369 for the healing heroes among whom were Asclepius, Amphiaraus, and Achilles. The significance of the term *iatroi* as applied to the biblical Rephaim by the authors of the Septuagint will be taken up in 4.8. On the fate of the common dead in Greece as deserving of pity rather than fear or reverence, cf. Garland 1985; 1992:31–34.

[21] Cf. Jensen 1963:291–92.

[22] The Second Vatican Council made the following pronouncement with regard to the cult of the saints: "Let the faithful be taught, therefore, that the authentic cult of the saints consists not so much in the multiplying of external acts, but rather in the intensity of our active love. By such love, for our greater good and that of the Church, we seek from the saints example in the way of life, fellowship in their communion, and aid in their intercession," cf. Abbot 1966:84; note Hawley 1987 for a more recent assessment of the cult of the saints.

the living, actively participate in the mundane affairs of the living.[23] Goody's definition requires further qualification since, as it stands, it also encompasses the veneration of the dead. The worship of the dead requires that the living serve the dead in a greater capacity. Mere gratitude and care will not suffice. The same goes for inducements. The dead require the highest form of reverence for they can act independently of the high god(s) to affect the world of the living. They are, in effect, equal in power with the god(s). The living must propitiate the dead through the offer of goods, services, words, and other gestures in order to secure their favor. Similarly, our use of *ancestor worship* will be restricted to those acts which reflect the belief that the power possessed by the ancestor is equivalent to that of a deity. However, the ancestral dead are restricted vis-à-vis their extent of influence. While they can directly influence the living like the gods, they do so only within the boundaries of lineal descendancy. In other words, they act only on behalf of the genealogically-related living.

Another related practice reminiscent of the belief in man's persistence after death is the *care for* or *feeding of the dead*. In this case, the dead have not escaped all human frailty and so are perceived as in need of assistance, even sustenance. Care for or feeding of the dead typically carries with it the implicit notion that the dead are weak; they have no power to affect the living in a beneficial way. In the case of the ancestors, the *care for* or *feeding of the ancestors* is motivated by the obligation to continue one's filial duties for immediate lineal predecessors after their death. This keeps the ancestors alive and their presence continually accessible to the living descendants as they partake together of the food offered to the ancestors.[24] Nevertheless, the ancestors are not necessarily viewed as superior beings for they lack power. In order to underscore the fact that such care does not necessitate the belief that the dead supernaturally bestow some benefit upon their devotees, we have excluded the care and feeding of the dead from the category of the death or ancestor cult. For purposes of the present investigation, these ritual complexes along with the commemoration of the dead have been located in what we have designated as the *mortuary cult*.[25]

As in the case of the care for and feeding of the dead, death and ancestor cults should not be equated with the *commemoration of the dead* or *geneonymy*.[26] This form of commemoration is that which perpetuates the memory of the deceased. It does not by necessity assume the persistence of man after death beyond the recall of the dead in the mind of the living. While geneonymy presupposes the

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[23] Goody 1962:18,20–25,379.

[24] Cf. Fortes 1976:10–11,14.

[25] Hultkrantz 1978:102–03 similarly eliminated the care for and feeding of the dead from the category of the death cult.

[26] On geneonymy, cf. Goody 1962:379; Fortes 1965:123–24; 1976:4; Newell 1976:19–20.

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